

§ 70.41

below, charges may only be assessed for review at the initial level, i.e. the review undertaken the first time the documents are analyzed to determine the applicability of specific exemptions to the particular record or portion of the record. Thus a requester would not be charged for review at the administrative appeal level with regard to the applicability of an exemption already applied at the initial level. When, however, a record has been withheld pursuant to an exemption which is subsequently determined not to apply and is reviewed again at the appellate level to determine the potential applicability of other exemptions, the costs attendant to such additional review may be assessed.

(4) *Mailing cost.* Where requests for copies are made by mail, no postage charge will be made for transmitting by regular mail a single copy of the requested record to the requester, or for mailing additional copies where the total postage cost does not exceed \$1. However, where the volume of page copy or method of transmittal requested is such that transmittal charges to the Department are in excess of \$1, the transmittal costs will be added, unless appropriate stamps or stamped envelopes are furnished with the request, or authorization is given for collection of shipping charges on delivery.

(e) *Privacy Act requesters.* Requests from individuals for records about themselves which are contained within agency systems of records shall be treated under the fee provisions of the Privacy Act of 1974 which permit the assessment of reproduction costs only, after providing the first copy of a file at no cost.

[54 FR 23144, May 30, 1989; 54 FR 30503, July 20, 1989]

§ 70.41 Reduction or waiver of fees.

This section sets forth conditions under which the applicable charges for records responsive to a request under 5 U.S.C. 552, as set forth in § 70.40, are subject to reduction or waiver by the disclosure officer.

(a) *Statutorily required waiver or reduction in fees.* Documents shall be furnished without charge or at a charge below the fees set forth in § 70.40 if all

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of the following conditions are satisfied:

(1) The subject of the requested records concerns the operations or activities of the United States Government;

(2) The disclosure of the requested records is likely to contribute to an understanding of Government operations or activities;

(3) The disclosure is likely to contribute to a public understanding of such operations or activities;

(4) The contribution to public understanding of government operations and activities will be significant; and

(5) The public's interest in disclosure exceeds the requester's commercial interest in disclosure.

(b) *De minimis costs.* Where the cost of collecting a fee to be assessed to a requester exceeds the amount of the fee which would otherwise be assessed, no fee need be charged. Under normal circumstances, fees which do not exceed \$5.00 need not be collected.

(c) *Reformulating requests.* When the estimated reproduction costs are likely to exceed \$25.00, the requester may be notified of the estimated amount of fees, unless the requester has indicated in advance its willingness to pay fees as high as those anticipated. Such notice may invite the requester to reformulate the request to satisfy his or her needs at a lower cost.

§ 70.42 Ancillary considerations.

(a) *Costs assessed when no records are disclosed.* The costs of searching for and, in the case of a commercial use request, reviewing records may be assessed even where ultimately no documents are disclosed or located.

(b) *Aggregating requests.* A requester may not file multiple requests, each seeking portions of a document or documents in order to avoid the payment of fees. When there is reason to believe that a requester or a group of requesters acting in concert, is attempting to break a request down into a series of requests for the purpose of evading the assessment of fees, any such requests may be aggregated and the requesters charged as if there were only a single request.

(c) *Advance payments.* An advance payment before work is commenced or